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CENTRAL ADVISORY WATER COMMITTEE

Sub-Committee on The Growing Demand for Water

SECOND REPORT

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CENTRAL ADVISORY WATER COMMITTEE SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE GROWING DEMAND FOR WATER

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SECOND REPORT TO THE CENTRAL ADVISORY WATER COMMITTEE

I. APPOINTMENT

In our first report, presented in December, 1958, we pointed out that our estimates of water demands and resources made no allowance for agricultural irrigation. There were already clear indications that, especially in the form of the comparatively new technique of spray irrigation, this was capable of putting a severe strain on the water resources of those parts of the country in the main least able to stand increased demands and the subject required further investigation, which we hoped to undertake.

The Central Advisory Water Committee, when adopting the report, asked us to undertake a further inquiry, to establish whether abstractions of surface water, not only for irrigation, were increasing to such an extent that powers of control should be sought, and extended our terms of reference, which now read as follows:—

"(*a*) To consider the extent to which the demand for water for domestic, industrial, agricultural and other purposes is increasing and is likely to increase; to consider the problems involved in meeting these demands, including, in broad terms, the cost; to consider whether there are any substantial economies in the use or cost of water which could be made without reduction in standards of hygiene or in industrial or agricultural efficiency; and to make recommendations.

(*b*) In connection with their investigations into the extent to which demands for water are increasing and the problems involved in meeting those demands, to enquire into the extent of uncontrolled abstractions of surface water for agriculture, especially irrigation, for industry and for other purposes, and into the effect of such abstractions on the quantity and quality of surface water available for all purposes; to consider whether powers are needed to control such abstractions in general or in particular; and to make recommendations."

Mr. Clark, Mr. Davey, Mr. Etheridge, Mr. Hiller, the Earl of Malmesbury, Mr. Rowntree and Mr. J. I. Taylor accepted invitations to become co-opted members for this stage of the Sub-Committee's inquiries. Advice also continued to be available from assessors appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Board of Trade, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

We were later asked to advise as a matter of urgency on the basic question whether a need to control abstractions had been established and we are therefore presenting an interim report on this question. We are continuing our work and we expect to present a more detailed report at a later date on such matters as the form of authority to operate any system of control and the method of operation, as well as certain other matters held over from our first report.

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II. THE NEED FOR A CONTROL OF ABSTRACTIONS OF SURFACE WATER

We have received sufficient evidence to convince us that there is now a risk that growing abstractions may seriously deplete the natural flow of many rivers and streams. The chief of these abstractions is for irrigation, which is increasing apace, and which if not regulated could overtax water resources, at any rate in some areas, since little if any of the water abstracted is returned and the heaviest demand tends to occur when flows are at their lowest. Private abstractions of surface water are for the most part uncontrolled (apart from the operation of the common law). We have concluded that in circumstances where the situation calls for such a step, abstractions, notably for irrigation, where the water is substantially consumed without return, should be subject to control.

We have received many suggestions on the form of control and complicated issues are involved which will engage our attention for some time. In the meanwhile where it is necessary to introduce a temporary method of control we consider that this should be entrusted to the river boards, subject to a right of appeal to the Minister against a decision. This suggestion is made without prejudice to any future recommendations which we may make as to the ultimate form of organisation, after inquiring further into the problems involved and taking further evidence.

While in the short term some control of abstractions is, in our view, unavoidable, we cannot emphasise too strongly that in principle the ultimate object should be a form of control which would also provide for conservation and storage so that water would be available for all legitimate purposes.

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March, 1960.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS FROM WHICH EVIDENCE WAS RECEIVED

1. Society of Medical Officers of Health.
2. Dock and Harbour Authorities' Association.
3. Gas Council.
4. Salmon and Trout Association.
5. Association of Municipal Corporations.
6. Anglers' Co-operative Association.
7. Bedford Corporation.
8. Central Electricity Generating Board.
9. National Farmers' Union.
10. Institution of Civil Engineers.
11. British Transport Commission.
12. Association of Drainage Authorities.
13. River Boards' Association.
14. Federation of British Industries.
15. Institution of Water Engineers.
16. Urban District Councils Association.
17. Country Landowners' Association.
18. British Waterworks Association.
19. County Councils Association.
20. Test and Itchen Fishing Association.
21. Kent Joint Advisory Water Committee.
22. National Federation of Anglers.
23. National Coal Board.
24. Surface Water Survey Centre.
25. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
26. Ministry of Housing and Local Government.
27. Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

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